



**Ron C. Cross**

## WE VOTE.....AND THEN YOU VOTE!!

*By Ron C. Cross*

*Board of Commission Chairman*

On March 6, 2006, the Columbia County Commission will meet at our new library to begin discussion on our proposed capital improvement plan (CIP) for needed projects across the County. There will be much verbiage concerning the actual need of improvements, priorities, costs, my favorites, your favorites, my district, your district, etc., but ultimately, we will determine what we think is the best list of proposed projects for all County citizens.

Following this meeting, three public workshop sessions will be held to explain the purpose of the CIP, to discuss the projects proposed by the Commission, and to determine other projects desired by the community.

Input from these public meetings will be considered by the Commission and a final list of projects will be determined. The Board will then decide whether to put a CIP referendum on the November ballot.

During this very serious and important planning session of the Commission, major soil erosion and transportation projects needing immediate attention as well as additional opportunities to offer more recreation and greenspace will be discussed. Our plan is to formulate a comprehensive program of projects estimated to cost approximately \$30 to \$50 million to present to you, the voters, in a referendum on the November General Election. Our goal is to design the improvement plan so that the requested millage rate would be no more than one mill. That means an increase of \$40 per year for a residence valued at \$100,000. In the past, Columbia County voters have been very supportive of these programs - the most recent being the referendum that brought us the Justice Center and the Detention Center expansion. In addition, voters have also voted for SPLOST programs that recently produced the new library, Blanchard Woods Park, and other important additions to the County.

The Commission has not abandoned the concept that these improvements could be financed by the receipt of franchise fees, but it does not appear that the Legislative Delegation will allow us to vote on the consolidation issue this year which would allow the County to collect franchise fees. If this could happen in the future, which it should for the future of the County, then this proposed tax increase could be deleted by having franchise fees dedicated to the repayment of the bond.

None of us likes to pay taxes. However, this is the best proposal since we, the voters, get to make the final decision. I, personally, am not in favor of raising property taxes by Commission action. I am, however, planning to vote for consolidation and the capital improvements program because both are very important to the long range well-being of Columbia County. I hope all of you agree and more importantly, I hope we get the opportunity to vote in the near future.

## Columbia County Gains National Recognition

Being positively recognized on the state and national level is very important in commercial and industrial development. Columbia County has recently reached national attention in many facets. We:

- Came in 32nd in the top 100 best places to live in the U.S. by MONEY magazine.
- Will host the national CITGO BassMaster Elite Series fishing tournament May 4-7 at Wildwood Park which will also be featured on ESPN.
- Will host the Archery Shooters Association National Championship at Wildwood Park March 29th – April 2nd.
- Will soon begin construction on the log cabin national headquarters for the Professional Disc Golf Association located at Wildwood Park.
- Were featured in the 2006 "Beautiful Places" calendar for Walker Mowers. A picture of our Justice Center was one of nine U.S. and four international locations highlighted and was selected from four thousand submittals. Congratulations to Preferred Landscape Maintenance for having their expertise nationally recognized.



### UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 11th (Saturday,) - Keep Columbia County Beautiful 's Shoreline Cleanup at Lake Thurmond - 8:30 – 10:30 AM
- March 25th (Saturday) - The Great American Clean-Up starting at 9:00 AM
- March 29th –April 2nd (Wednesday - Sunday) - Archery Shooters Association National Tournament at Wildwood Park. Come and welcome approximately 1,000 participants as they take aim at 3-D targets and compete for the tournament title.

For more information on these events or to volunteer, please call (706) 312-7191.

